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Baby formula shortage fueling spike in milk bank interest

Associated Press

The U.S. baby formula shortage has sparked a surge of interest at milk banks around the U.S. with some mothers offering to donate breast milk and desperate parents calling to see if it's a solution to keep their babies fed.

It's a pathway that won't work for every formula-fed baby, especially those with special dietary needs, and it comes with challenges because the country's dozens of nonprofit milk banks prioritize feeding medically fragile infants. The organizations collect milk from mothers and process it, including through pasteurization, then work with hospitals to distribute it.

The shortage stemmed from a safety recall and supply disruptions and has captured national attention with panicked parents looking to swap and buy formula online and President Joe Biden urging manufacturers to increase production and discussing with retailers how they could restock shelves to meet regional disparities.

Continued on next page



Ashley Maddox feeds her 5-month-old son, Cole, with formula she bought through a Facebook group of mothers in need Thursday, May 12, 2022, in Imperial Beach, Calif.

Associated Press

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Rebecca Heinrich, director of the Mothers' Milk Bank, loads frozen milk donated by lactating mothers from plastic bags into bottles for distribution to babies Friday, May 13, 2022, at the foundation's headquarters in Arvada, Colo.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

Biden's administration also said Friday that formula maker Abbott Laboratories committed to give rebates through August for a food stamp-like program that helps women, infants and children called WIC.

At the Mothers' Milk Bank Northeast, based in Newton, Massachusetts, interest in donating and receiving milk because of the shortage has spiked. Typically, the milk bank gets about 30-50 calls a month from people looking to donate. On Thursday alone, 35 calls came in from potential donors, said Deborah Youngblood, the bank's executive director.

"It's interesting the first sort of response that we got was from potential donors — so people responding to the formula shortage with sort of an amazing, compassionate response of how can I be part of the solution?" she said.

Youngblood was talking about people like Kayla Gillespie, a 38-year-old mother of three from Hays, Kansas. Gillespie first donated to the Mothers' Milk Bank in Denver six years ago, giving 18 gallons (68

liters) after the birth of her first child, and wasn't planning to do it again.

"I thought 18 gallons was sufficient for one person," she said. "If I hadn't heard of the shortage, I wouldn't be going through the process again, just because I have three kids and it's a little chaotic around here." She has pledged at least 150 ounces of her milk, but said she expects to give much more than that.

"I'm very blessed with being able to produce milk, so I just felt I needed to do something," she said.

She said in the past she has shipped her frozen milk in special containers to Denver, but this time, her local hospital is taking the donations and she can just drop them off. It's not just donors, though. Parents desperately seeking nutrition for their babies are pursuing milk banks as well.

At the Massachusetts milk bank, about 30 people called looking for milk because they couldn't find their baby's usual formula, Youngblood said. That's up from nearly no calls at all, since the milk bank typically serves hospitals.

The Human Milk Banking Association of North America, an accrediting organization for nonprofit milk banks, is seeing a "major increase" in demand, according to Lindsay Groff, the group's executive director. She estimates inquiries from parents seeking to fill the formula gap are up 20% in recent days.

Groff called the shortage a "crisis" and said it's not as simple as parents just supplementing with donated human milk, because the vast majority of those supplies are earmarked for babies with medical conditions.

"If people can donate, now would be the time because when we have more of an inventory we can look beyond the medically fragile," she said.

Parents are also turning to online breastmilk-swapping forums to meet their babies' needs.

Amanda Kastelein, a mother of three from Middlebury, Connecticut, has been supplementing the special formula she needs for 10-month-old Emerson with breast milk from a mom she found on a peer-to-peer Facebook page called Hu-

man Milk 4 Human Babies. Kastelein stopped breastfeeding after getting recurring infections, but tried to begin re-lactating in March after the formula recall, with little success.

"Emerson is allergic to most of the formulas, so it's been difficult to find something he's not allergic to," she said.

In stepped Hannah Breton of Naugatuck, Connecticut, who had been producing more milk than her 2 1/2-month-old son needs. She's been giving Kastelein about 60 ounces of milk every two weeks. That's enough to supplement her formula supply and keep Emerson fed.

"She asked a bunch of questions — what medications I'm taking, if any, that kind of thing," Breton said. "So we decided, 'OK, that's perfect.' So, she comes by every couple weeks and picks up the milk I've been saving for her."

"I do feel helpful," she added. "It's exciting and rewarding that I can give to a mom that can't find what she's looking for, and if her son can't take formula, I mean, it's scary."

Rebecca Heinrich, director

of the Mothers' Milk Bank in Colorado, advises those looking for milk that searching for donors on their own can carry risks.

"We want to make sure that these moms are being as safe as they can and meeting the needs of their infant, so consulting with their health-care provider on how to meet those needs is the best way to go," she said.

The shortage creates difficulties particularly for lower-income families after the recall by formula maker Abbott, stemming from contamination concerns. The recall depleted many brands covered by WIC, a federal program like food stamps serving women, infants and children, though it now permits brand substitutes.

On Friday, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack sent a letter to the head of Abbott Laboratories expressing what he called his "grave concern regarding the accessibility of safe infant formula," noting Abbott holds infant formula contracts in the federal WIC program. Vilsack asked that Abbott continue a program that provides rebates for alternative products including formula for competitive brands, which it had been doing on a month-to-month basis. The White House said Friday Abbott committed to the rebates through the end of August. The Biden administration said it's working with states to make it easier for WIC recipients to buy different sizes of formula that their benefits might not currently cover. Abbott has said that pending Food and Drug Administration approval, it could restart a manufacturing site "within two weeks." The company would begin by producing EleCare, Alimentum and metabolic formulas and then start production of Similac and other formulas. Once production begins, it would take six to eight weeks for the formula to be available on shelves. On Tuesday, the FDA said it was working with U.S. manufacturers to increase their output and streamline paperwork to allow more imports. □

Former national security adviser Robert McFarlane dies at 84

By BEN FOX

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former White House national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane, a top aide to President Ronald Reagan who pleaded guilty to charges for his role in an illegal arms-for-hostages deal known as the Iran-Contra affair, has died. He was 84. McFarlane, who lived in Washington, died Thursday from complications of a previous illness at a hospital in Michigan, where he was visiting family, according to a family statement.

"As his family we wish to share our deep sadness at the loss of our beloved husband, father and grandfather, and note his profound impact on our lives," the family said in the statement. "Though recognized as a strategic political thinker, we remember him for his warmth, his wisdom, his deep belief in God, and his commitment to serving others."

McFarlane, a former Marine lieutenant colonel and Vietnam combat veteran, resigned his White House



Former national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane gestures while testifying before the House-Senate panel investigating the Iran-Contra affair on Capitol Hill in Washington, May 13, 1987.

Associated Press

post in December 1985. He was later pressed into service by the administration as part of secret — and illegal — plan to sell arms to Iran in exchange for the freedom of Western hostages in the Middle East and pass along the pro-

ceeds to the contra rebels in Nicaragua for their fight against the Marxist Sandinista government.

He played a major role in the affair, leading the secret delegation to Tehran, then as now a U.S. adversary, to open contact with

so-called moderate Iranians who were thought to hold influence with kidnappers of American hostages. He brought with him a cake and a Bible signed by Reagan.

The scheme began to unfold after a cargo plane

carrying a CIA-arranged shipment of arms was shot down in October 1986 by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, setting off what eventually became one of the biggest modern political scandals.

McFarlane was rushed to a Washington-area hospital in February 1987 after taking an overdose of Valium the day before he was scheduled to testify before a presidential commission investigating the affair. He pleaded guilty in March 1988 to four misdemeanor counts of withholding information from Congress. His lawyer said he was being unfairly singled out because he, unlike other key figures in the affair, testified willingly before investigative panels. He also admitted his role.

"I did indeed withhold information from the Congress," he told reporters at the time. "I believe strongly that, throughout, my actions were motivated by what I believed to be in the foreign policy interest of the United States." □

U.S., Russian defense chiefs speak for 1st time since invasion

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russian Minister of Defense Sergey Shoygu spoke with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Friday after months of refusing direct contact with his American counterpart. But officials said the call didn't appear to signal any change in Moscow's war in Ukraine. A senior Defense Department official said Friday that while Austin believes the hour-long conversation was important in the effort to keep lines of communication open, it didn't resolve any "acute issues" or lead to any change in what the Russians are doing or saying as the war enters week 12.

The call — initiated by Austin — marked the highest level American contact with a Russian official since the war began in late February. Over the past several months, Pentagon officials

have repeatedly said that Russian leaders declined to take calls from Austin and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This is the first conversation between Austin and Shoygu since Feb. 18, a week before the war started. Another senior official said Friday that Milley is expected to also reach out to his counterpart, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, Russian chief of the general staff.

In a statement, the Pentagon said that Austin "urged an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and emphasized the importance of maintaining lines of communication."

Several officials described the call as a positive step, but said there was no clear reason why the Russians decided to go ahead with the conversation on Friday. The defense official said that the U.S. hopes it will serve as a springboard for

future conversation and that it appeared that Austin's request for future communication was received.

The official characterized the tenor of the call as "professional" but provided no other details on its content. Direct communications between the U.S. and Russian defense and military leaders is considered crucial in order to avoid any misunderstandings or unwarranted escalation in hostilities. The U.S. and Russia have also set up a so-called de-escalation line that can be used by the militaries in the event of any emergency or perceived threat to NATO allies around Ukraine. It has not been used, but U.S. officials say that the Russians have answered the phone during tests to ensure it works.

U.S. and other Western officials have described Russia's fight in Ukraine, particularly the effort to wrest greater control over the



Associated Press

eastern Donbas region as more than two weeks behind schedule, and failing to make consistent progress.

On Friday, Russian forces suffered heavy losses in a Ukrainian attack that destroyed a pontoon bridge they were using to try to cross a river in the east, in what Ukrainian, British and U.S. officials said is another sign of Moscow's struggle to salvage a war gone awry. Ukraine's airborne com-

mand released photos and video of what it said was a damaged Russian pontoon bridge over the Siversky Donets River and several destroyed or damaged Russian military vehicles nearby. The command said its troops "drowned the Russian occupiers."

The battle for the Donbas, which has heated up since Russia's bid to take Kyiv failed, has become a daily grind, as towns and villages change hands. □

Tax cut for California pot industry: Too little, too late?

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California's governor on Friday proposed a temporary tax cut for the state's struggling legal marijuana industry, but businesses said it falls far short of what's needed to revive a foundering pot economy.

Broad legal sales began in California in 2018, but the industry has been burdened by hefty taxes that can approach 50% in some areas, costly regulation and competition from a flourishing illegal marketplace, which industry analysts estimate is at least twice the size of the legal one.

Meanwhile, a glut of cannabis from corporate-scale farms has sent wholesale prices into a tailspin, leaving some growers unable to make a profit.

California was once envisioned as a national model for legal sales, but industry leaders warned Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom in December that the state's licensed industry was verging on collapse and needed immediate tax relief and a swift expansion of retail outlets to survive.

In a proposal to the Legislature for the budget year that starts in July, the Newsom administration recom-



A grower at Loving Kindness Farms attends to a crop of young marijuana plants in Gardena, Calif., on Dec. 28, 2018.

Associated Press

mended eliminating the much-despised cultivation tax, which is set at \$161 on a pound of buds. But to make up for those lost funds, the state after three years would raise the excise tax imposed on retail cannabis purchases to 19%, up from the current 15%.

Under the proposal, however, an excise tax jump could come sooner.

If the state isn't taking in enough cannabis tax mon-

ey to support a range of education, law enforcement and other programs — a total of \$670 million each year — the excise tax could be stepped up to cover that gap as soon as January 2024, though not necessarily to the 19% level. Additionally the state is putting up a one-time \$150 million stream of funds to help cover those costs.

There are other provisions, including about \$20 million

for grants to communities to accelerate licensing for retail shops. While cannabis is legal in California, many communities have either banned it or not set up local licensing programs for markets to operate. There are less than 1,000 retail shops, down from about 8,000 before broad legalization kicked in, businesses say.

Overall, the governor's proposed changes would

"greatly simplify tax compliance, reduce the overall tax burden for our licensees and help stabilize the legal market," said Nicole Elliott, director of the state Department of Cannabis Control.

If approved, the plan would represent the first change in tax policy since legal sales kicked off. However, some taxes, including cultivation, have increased over that time.

The plan disappointed leading businesses, which had been seeking elimination of the cultivation tax, along with a cut in the excise tax imposed on retail sales to 5%, down from 15%, among other changes.

Jerred Kiloh of the United Cannabis Business Association, a Los Angeles-based trade group, said the plan would not allow companies to reduce steep consumer prices that have been driving buyers into the underground market, where taxes are not imposed and prices are cheaper.

And it's even possible the plan could result in higher costs for consumers at the retail counter, Kiloh warned. "All they are really doing is shifting some taxes around, and it's not ever going to get to the customer," Kiloh added. □

Woman named sexton of historic Boston church for 1st time



In this handout photograph provided by Jason Fishman, Chelsea Millsap, who was named sexton of the historic Old North Church, poses May 3, 2022 in Boston.

Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The thousands of tourists who visit Boston's Old North Church probably won't see much of Chelsea Millsap on their trip, even though she may

just have the most important job at the historic site. Millsap, 32, who can trace her ancestry to the Pilgrims, is the first woman named sexton in the church's near-

ly 300-year history. It's a job that involves caring for and maintaining the parish buildings and equipment, including an 18th-century clock, the 75-piece chandeliers and the crypt where more than 1,100 people have been laid to rest.

One of her first tasks will be managing a major renovation and restoration of the crypt.

The church, still home to an active Episcopal congregation, is famous as the place where in 1775, two lanterns in the steeple signaled that British soldiers were heading to Concord and Lexington, sending Paul Revere on the ride that sparked the American Revolution. The event was immortalized in Henry Wad-

sworth Longfellow's 1860 poem "Paul Revere's Ride." One of the people who hung the lanterns was Robert Newman, the sexton at that time. "What an incredible opportunity to be able to sit in the very same pew as Robert Newman and in a world that is so divided to work in a place that welcomes all people from Bostonians to world dignitaries, like the Queen," Millsap, a Detroit native and former firefighter with experience in fire prevention, security technology and project management, said in a statement.

"I could have been the one to hang the lanterns 247 years ago. It is such an honor to show women that they too can hold these

sorts of jobs."

One of Millsap's jobs is to climb the steeple stairs to light the lanterns during commemorations of the event.

Millsap is a descendant of teenage Mayflower passenger Mary Chilton, who is buried at nearby King's Chapel in Boston.

"The sexton is an incredibly important role at Old North, serving both the church and historic site and connecting a nearly 300-year lineage of caretakers," Nikki Stewart, executive director of the Old North Foundation said. "Chelsea's passion for public history and historic preservation will ensure that Old North Church carries on for generations to come." □

Unionists block new N. Ireland govt over Brexit trade rules

LONDON (AP) — Northern Ireland's second-biggest political party on Friday blocked the formation of a working legislature in Belfast, and said it would keep up the boycott until the U.K. government tears up post-Brexit trade rules it accuses of destabilizing the region. The Democratic Unionist Party's move deepens Northern Ireland's political deadlock, which is fueling a U.K.-EU feud that could balloon into a trade war between Britain and the 27-nation European Union. The DUP came second in a Northern Ireland Assembly election last week that saw Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein win the most seats the first time a party that seeks union with the Republic of Ireland has won an election in the bastion of Protestant power.

Under Northern Ireland's mandatory power-sharing rules, that gives Sinn Fein the post of first minister, with the DUP taking the deputy first minister job. A government can't be formed unless both roles are filled, and the DUP says it won't take part unless border checks on goods moving to Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K. are scrapped.

It stymied attempts to elect a speaker for the assembly



Democratic Unionist Party leader Jeffrey Donaldson pauses as he speaks to the media at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, Monday, May 9, 2022.

Associated Press

when they met for the first time on Friday, leaving the assembly unable to function.

"The DUP received a mandate to remove the Irish Sea border and our mandate will be given respect," assembly member Paul Givan told legislators. "Our message is now clear: It is time for action, words will no longer suffice."

DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson said the party's concerns over the new trade rules, known as the North-

ern Ireland Protocol, "are not merely some political squabble."

"The protocol is a direct challenge to the principles that have underpinned every agreement reached in Northern Ireland over the last 25 years" of Northern Ireland's peace process, he said. "It erodes the very foundations that devolution has been built upon." Sinn Fein leader Michelle O'Neill accused the DUP of "disgracefully holding the public to ransom for their

Brexit mess."

Naomi Long, leader of the centrist Alliance Party, the third largest in the assembly, said it was "a shameful day for the DUP."

"We want to serve the public but are prevented from doing so," she said.

Arrangements for Northern Ireland the only part of the U.K. that shares a land border with an EU nation have been the thorniest subject of contention in the U.K.'s divorce from the bloc, which became final at the

end of 2020.

A deal was agreed to keep the Irish border free of customs posts and other checks, because an open border is a key pillar of the peace process that ended decades of violence in Northern Ireland. Instead, there are checks on some goods, such as meat and eggs, entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K.

The arrangement is opposed by the DUP and other unionists in Northern Ireland, who say the new checks have created a barrier with the rest of the U.K. that is hurting businesses and undermines unionists' British identity.

Sinn Fein and the other nationalist and nonaligned parties, which collectively got a majority of votes in the election, want to keep the Protocol.

Many people and businesses in Northern Ireland just want a functioning government.

"The uncomfortable truth is, while this continues, the reputational damage to Northern Ireland as a place to invest and work grows daily," said Paul Murnaghan, president of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry. □

Australia says Chinese spy ship has been hugging west coast

Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)

— Australia's defense minister said Friday that a Chinese warship with spying capabilities had been hugging the nation's western coastline in what amounted to an "aggressive act." Minister Peter Dutton said the ship was sighted Friday morning heading north about 250 nautical miles from Broome in Western Australia, and had been tracked along the coastline for the past week.

"Its intention, of course, is to collect intelligence right along the coastline," Dutton said. "It has been in close proximity to military and intelligence installations on the west coast of Australia."

He said it was without precedent for a Chinese warship to venture so far south and that authorities were monitoring the ship closely with planes and surveillance techniques. He said he wanted to be open and honest with Australians about the situation.

"I think it is an aggressive act, and I think particularly because it has come so far south," Dutton said.

Asked about the ship sighting, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said he had no information about the specific situation, but that "China always abides by international law and international practice."

"The relevant Australian politician should see the

relevant situation objectively and calmly, and not make sensational remarks," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing.

Tensions between China and Australia have been heightened recently after China signed a security pact with the Solomon Islands.

Australians will go to the polls in eight days to vote in a general election. Dutton said the timing of his announcement had nothing to do with the election campaign.

Australia's Defence Force identified the ship as a Dongdiao Class Auxiliary Intelligence ship named Haiwangxing.

"Australia respects the right of all states to exercise



In this image supplied by the Australian Department of Defence, Chinese People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLA-N) Intelligence Collection Vessel Haiwangxing operating off the north-west shelf of Australia, Wednesday, May 11, 2022.

Associated Press

freedom of navigation and overflight in international waters and airspace, just as we expect others to respect our right to do the same,"

the Defence Force said in a statement. "Defence will continue to monitor the ship's operation in our maritime approaches." □

Israeli police beat pallbearers at journalist's funeral

By JOSEF FEDERMAN

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli riot police on Friday pushed and beat pallbearers at the funeral for slain Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, causing them to briefly drop the casket in a shocking start to a procession that turned into perhaps the largest display of Palestinian nationalism in Jerusalem in a generation.

The scenes of violence were likely to add to the sense of grief and outrage across the Arab world that has followed the death of Abu Akleh, who witnesses say was killed by Israeli troops Wednesday during a raid in the occupied West Bank. They also illustrated the deep sensitivities over east Jerusalem -- which is claimed by both Israel and the Palestinians and has sparked repeated rounds of violence.

Abu Akleh, 51, was a household name across the Arab world, synonymous with Al Jazeera's coverage of life under Israeli rule, which is well into its sixth decade with no end in sight. A 25-year veteran of the satellite channel, she was revered by Palestinians as a local hero.

Thousands of people, many waving Palestinian flags and chanting "Palestine! Palestine!" attended the funeral. It was believed to be the largest Palestinian funeral in Jerusalem since Faisal Husseini, a Palestinian leader and scion of a prominent family, died in 2001.

Ahead of the burial, a large crowd gathered to escort her casket from an east Jerusalem hospital to a Catholic church in the nearby Old City. Many of the mourners held Palestinian flags, and the crowd began shouting, "We sacrifice our soul and blood for you, Shireen."

Shortly after, Israel police moved in, pushing and clubbing mourners. As the helmeted riot police approached, they hit pallbearers, causing one man to lose control of the casket as it dropped toward the ground. Police ripped Palestinian flags out of



Israeli police confront with mourners as they carry the casket of slain Al Jazeera veteran journalist Shireen Abu Akleh during her funeral in east Jerusalem, Friday, May 13, 2022.

Associated Press

people's hands and fired stun grenades to disperse the crowd.

Abu Akleh's brother, Tony, said the scenes "prove that Shireen's reports and honest words ... had a powerful impact."

Al Jazeera correspondent Givara Budeiri said the police crackdown was like killing Abu Akleh again. "It seems her voice isn't silent," she said during a report by the broadcaster.

East Jerusalem, home to the city's most important Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy sites, was captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war. It claims all of the city as its eternal capital and has annexed the eastern sector in a move that is not internationally recognized.

The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as the capital of a future independent state. Israel routinely clamps down on any displays of support for Palestinian statehood. The conflicting claims to east Jerusalem often spill over into violence, helping fuel an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza militants last year and more recently sparking weeks of unrest at the city's most sensitive holy site.

Outside of prayers at the Al Aqsa Mosque, Israel rarely allows large Palestinian gatherings in east Jerusalem and routinely clamps

down on any displays of support for Palestinian statehood.

Police said the crowd at the hospital was chanting "nationalist incitement," ignored calls to stop and threw stones at them. "The policemen were forced to act," police said. They issued a video in which a commander outside the hospital warns the crowd that police will come in if they don't stop their incitement and "nationalist songs."

An Israeli official said the details of the funeral had been coordinated with the family ahead of time to ensure it would run smoothly, but that "masses began gathering around the hearse of Shireen Abu Akleh and chaos ensued," preventing the procession from going along its intended route. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Earlier this week, Abu Akleh's brother said the original arrangement was to move the casket in a hearse from the hospital to the church, and that after the service, it would be carried through the streets to the cemetery. It was not immediately clear why those plans had changed and pallbearers emerged from the hospital carrying the casket.

Al Jazeera said in a state-

ment that the police action "violates all international norms and rights."

"Israeli occupation forces attacked those mourning the late Shireen Abu Akleh after storming the French hospital in Jerusalem, where they severely beat the pallbearers," it said. The network added that it remains committed to covering the news and will not be deterred.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki called the images "deeply disturbing."

The focus should be "marking the memory of a remarkable journalist who lost her life," Psaki said. "We regret the intrusion into what should have been a peaceful procession."

During a Rose Garden event, U.S. President Joe Biden was asked whether he condemns the Israeli police actions at the funeral, and he replied: "I don't know all the details, but I know it has to be investigated."

Farhan Haq, a spokesman for U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, called the images from the funeral "very shocking," adding: "We want to make sure that the basic rights to freedom of assembly and, of course, the right to freedom of peaceful demonstration are protected and upheld." Israeli police later escorted the casket in a black van,

ripping Palestinian flags off the vehicle as it made its way to the church.

"We die for Palestine to live!" crowds chanted. "Our beloved home!"

Later, they sang the Palestinian national anthem and chanted "Palestine, Palestine!" before her body was buried in a cemetery outside the Old City.

Her grave was decorated with a Palestinian flag and flowers. The Palestinian ambassador to the U.K., Husam Zomlot, and Al Jazeera's bureau chief, Walid Al-Omari, placed flowers on the grave.

Salah Zuheika, a 70-year-old Palestinian, called Abu Akleh "the daughter of Jerusalem," and said the huge crowds were a "reward" for her love of the city.

"We already miss her, but what had happened today in the city will not be forgotten," he said.

Abu Akleh was a member of the small Palestinian Christian community in the Holy Land. Palestinian Christians and Muslims marched alongside one another Friday in a show of unity.

She was shot in the head during an Israeli military raid in the West Bank town of Jenin. But the circumstances of the shooting remain in dispute.

The Palestinians say army fire killed her, while the Israeli military said Friday that she was killed during an exchange with fire with Palestinian militants. It said it could not determine who was responsible for her death without a ballistic analysis.

"The conclusion of the interim investigation is that it is not possible to determine the source of the fire that hit and killed the reporter," the military said.

Israel has called for a joint investigation with the Palestinian Authority and for it to hand over the bullet for forensic analysis to determine who fired the fatal round. The PA has refused, saying it will conduct its own investigation and send the results to the International Criminal Court, which is already investigating possible Israeli war crimes. □

38 rescued, 11 dead as US searches waters near Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— At least 38 people have been rescued and 11 bodies found as the U.S. Coast Guard scoured the open waters northwest of Puerto Rico on Friday via boat, plane and helicopter in a bid to find more survivors after a boat carrying suspected migrants capsized. The group was first spotted Thursday morning by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection helicopter, with authorities warning it likely would have been too late to rescue anyone otherwise. Rescue efforts were concentrated in an area more than 11 miles (18 kilometers) north of the uninhabited island of Desecheo, which lies west of Puerto Rico.

"We always look for the possibility of finding survivors," said Coast Guard spokesman Ricardo Castrodad, adding that crews worked through the night.

It was not immediately clear how many people were in the boat. Of the 38 survivors, 36 were Haitian and two were from the Dominican Republic, he said. At least eight Haitian nationals have been hospitalized, although the nationalities of all those aboard was not immediately known.



This photo released by the Seventh U.S. Coast Guard District shows people standing on a capsized boat, left, as some of its passengers are pulled up on to a rescue boat, top, in the open waters northwest of Puerto Rico, Thursday, May 12, 2022.

Associated Press

"Our hope and prayers are with the survivors and those still missing," said Coast Guard Rear Admiral Brendan McPherson. "Our highest priority is saving lives, and that is what my crews will exhaust themselves doing."

All 11 victims were female, according to Puerto Rico's Forensic Science Institute, which announced it was forming a special team to perform autopsies Friday on the bodies recovered. María Conte Miller, the institute's executive director,

said her agency has been talking to Dominican consular officials to identify family members of those who died.

Authorities in recent months have noted a sharp increase in migrants, especially from Haiti and the Dominican Republic, making what they describe as dangerous voyages aboard rickety ships that often capsize or drop people off in uninhabited islands. It is one of the cheapest ways for migrants to flee poverty and violence, especially

in Haiti, where a spike in inflation, kidnappings and brutal gang violence have prompted people to take the risk and board a boat in search of a better life elsewhere.

From October 2021 to March, 571 Haitians and 252 people from the Dominican Republic were detained in waters around Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The majority of those Haitians, 348 of them, landed in Puerto Rico's un-

inhabited Mona Island and were rescued.

In fiscal year 2021, 310 Haitians and 354 Dominicans were detained, compared with the 22 Haitians and 313 Dominicans apprehended in fiscal year 2020.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Coast Guard said that in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, it apprehended 1,527 Haitians, 838 Cubans and 742 people from the Dominican Republic in the region, which includes Florida and the Caribbean.

In January, the Coast Guard searched for at least 38 people missing off Florida's coast after a suspected human smuggling boat that had left the Bahamas capsized in a storm. A sole survivor was reported.

More recent incidents include 68 migrants rescued Saturday in the Mona Passage, a treacherous area between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. One woman believed to be from Haiti died. Meanwhile, on May 7, Customs and Border Protection detained 60 Haitian migrants that the agency said were smuggled through southwest Puerto Rico. On May 4, another 59 Haitian migrants were detained in northwest Puerto Rico. □

U.N. humanitarian official urges attention to drought in Kenya

Associated Press

TURKANA, Kenya (AP) — A top United Nations humanitarian official has raised concern about people going hungry in a remote part of northern Kenya, joining calls for the international community to commit more resources to address the wider region's drought crisis.

Martin Griffiths, the U.N. under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said he saw families in Kenya's Turkana region that have nothing left after their animals starved to death. Turkana is an epicenter of the drought affecting parts of the East African country. "The world's attention is elsewhere, and we know that," Griffiths said during a visit to the region Thursday. "And the world's mis-

ery has not left Turkana, and the world's rains have not come to Turkana, and we've seen four successive failures of the rains."

Griffiths and other humanitarian representatives visited a pastoralist community in Turkana's Lomoputh area as part of efforts to draw attention to the humanitarian challenge stemming from the drought.

"Lomoputh deserves our attention," Griffiths said, noting that children scavenging for fruit to eat need help "to have the slightest possibility to survive to the next day."

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta declared the drought conditions a national disaster in September 2021.

Some residents of Lomoputh spoke to The Asso-

ciated Press of their desperate need for food aid.

"I have not received any help, and this child has not eaten anything since yesterday," Jecinta Maluk, a mother of five children, said. "This is the main problem."

The extreme drought in Kenya, where 3.5 million people are affected by severe food insecurity and acute malnutrition, has exacerbated the factors causing people to go hungry.

The U.N. warned earlier this year that an estimated 13 million people are facing severe hunger in the wider Horn of Africa region as a result of persistent drought conditions.

Malnutrition rates are high in the region, and drought conditions are affecting pastoral and farming com-



A mother helps her malnourished son stand after he collapsed near their hut in the village of Lomoputh in northern Kenya, Thursday, May 12, 2022.

Associated Press

munities.

Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya face the driest conditions recorded since 1981, the U.N. World Food Program reported in February. Somalia is seen as par-

ticularly vulnerable. About 250,000 people there died from hunger in 2011, when the U.N. declared a famine in some parts of the country. Half of them were children. □

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Some regions require proof or certification of negative COVID-19 status before allowing people into or out of the country. With rules and guidelines varying greatly from country to country, the safest ap-

proach is to have recent proof you are COVID-19 negative before you get to the airport. Covid Test Center @ Paseo provides both PCR and Antigen type testing with results within hours; and both are accepted by the CDC.

Covid Test Center @ Paseo is conveniently located at the Paseo Herencia Mall in the heart of the Palm Beach Strip and right across from the Playa Linda and Holiday Inn hotels; only two doors from T.G.I. Friday's. We are open seven days a week, between 9 am and 9 pm. This gives you the choice to walk in when it better suits you. It can be at the start or at the end of your day. No appointment needed here.

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A PCR test costs \$75 and results are ready the next day, while Antigen test costs \$35 with same day results. If you are staying at an off-high-rise area property, you can benefit from the free parking our customers receive at the mall lot.).

For more information follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. □

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Coming Soon: Auntie Anne's Pretzels

Brother and sister meet for the first time in Aruba

It's never too late to find where you came from, and potentially find your family. Dan Bruder tells the story of how he found his sister Pennie Arneson after 65 years, and finally met her here in Aruba.

Dan Bruder was adopted when he was just 8 weeks old. His adoptive mother and father along with their family were and are his family, and "that's all I ever knew. My mom and dad always offered to help me find my biological relatively, and I always said 'no, I'm good, I'm comfortable'" said Dan. His mother and father passed away a few years ago, but always maintained until the end that they were willing to help him find his biological family. Eventually Dan decided to make use of ancestry, 23andme and such, which led to him being able to see his family tree and all the connections. His results ended up identifying Pennie as a relative, "Dan contacted me and said 'I was adopted and I checked

my family and it says we're related' and I said I'm not really sure how," Pennie expressed.

He then explained to her that he's also related to another person who then Pennie told him was her son, expressing that "if you're related to me, you'd be related to him". He continued telling Pennie about the other people showing up, and mentioned Debbie, who is Pennie's sister, which helped her conclude that Dan was her relative from her father's side, "his DNA is actually closer to me than my sister Debbie who I was raised with," Pennie added.

This was the start of what would later become the reunion of two siblings, who never knew of the other's existence before. They started to "communicate and speak often, we faceted, and then COVID-19 hit so we kind of put the brakes on the idea of meeting."

Dan and his wife Helene

come to Aruba often. They are loyal visitors who have been coming to our island for more than 20 years, and visit us 3 to 4 times a year. Pennie lives with her husband Greg Arneson and their family in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, while Dan and his wife Helene Bruder live in New Jersey. "Pennie saw that we posted pictures of our trip and she said 'oh I see you were in Aruba'" which lead to Dan telling her they would be coming to Aruba on a trip soon, and Pennie then told him that they would be there as well.

For Dan, it's the first time he has ever met a blood relative, "I'm 66 years old and I'd never met a blood relative." When asked what motivated Dan to take the DNA test, he explained that "getting older you recognize the value and importance of family, and I just had that curiosity that started to itch more." Pennie had no idea she had any other siblings, "At first I didn't know where he fit in," said Pennie.

After meeting each other and personally getting to spend with together, the two have realized they have the most peculiar things in common which are very interesting, for instance, they both have Ducks as pets, which are surely not common pets to have, and the most interesting yet funniest thing they have in common you ask? "you know how you get a bucket of fried chicken?



well both of us will remove the chicken and eat the crumbles," Pennie shared. So now, even the Ducks have gained a relative!

"I feel like I've known him forever," Pennie said of her brother, adding that "there was no awkwardness when we met, I felt very comfortable." Dan explained that "it exceeded my expectations. It's such a pivotal milestone and you're hoping that it's not someone weird, but it has been amazing."

It's a very unique opportunity for the both Dan and Pennie alike, to know how much of who they are and what they do has been influenced by their genetics

and not their upbringing, seeing how they were brought up differently, but still have very distinctive similarities like the pet ducks and chicken crumbles, "It's duck's and chickens, a 'foul' relationship," Pennie joked.

It's a wonderful story to share, not only because it is opening something personal and starting a conversation about many different wonderful topics, but it's a story that we can all learn from and take something with us, seeing that it's never too late to find who we are and where we come from. "If we could be kind of the catalyst to something good, that's a good feeling," Dan concluded. □



Arubans - young & old - unite to plant food forest at workshop

Syntropic Agroforestry - Ban planta awa



Oranjestad – During the Covid-19 pandemic, many Arubans started planting because they saw the importance of growing their own food in times of shortage. But not many knew how to plant in such a way to get food in a short time.

Some Arubans still did not get a single crop after two years at all. For this reason, Eco Living Aruba and Community Matters took the initiative to organise a Non-for-profit workshop that



teaches Arubans how to plant a sustainable food forest in their own garden. Roland van Reenen, a world-renowned forest farmer and syntropic farming guru, was especially flown over from Curaçao as teacher for this workshop. Tickets sold out in 2 days.

Last chance - This month the organisation organizes the last 3-day Syntropic Agroforestry workshop of 2022. This may even be the final

opportunity for Arubans to learn how to easily turn a garden into a beautiful food forest and eat from it every day.

The dates of the workshop are as follows:
 Friday 20 May : 6pm – 9pm - Theory
 Saturday 21 May : 8am – 4pm - Practice
 Sunday 22 May : 8am – 4pm - Practice

There is also an information evening on Wednesday 18 May between 6pm-9pm for those people that can't make it to the entire workshop. People can register and get more information by sending an email to rose@ecolivingaruba.com.

Roland van Reenen teaches Arubans during the workshop the principles of Syntropic Agroforestry – a simple and effective way to turn (a part of) your garden into a sustainable food forest from which you can eat every day in the future. It is a misconception that we first need rain to plant plants; instead, we need plants for it to rain. – Roland van Reenen. So let's make Aruba green again. □

Sea turtle conservation by Turtugaruba Foundation

ORANJESTAD — Turtugaruba was founded on September 3rd, 2003 by a group of enthusiastic volunteers. Ten years earlier, in 1993, a Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan (STRAP) was introduced in Aruba and the rest of the Caribbean as an initiative of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Tom Barnes, who was working at DLVV (Department of Agriculture, Husbandry and Fishery) was one of the writers of the STRAP for Aruba, together with Karen Eckert, director of WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network). This is how sea turtle conservation started on the island following a plan that is still complied with today.

Tom formed a group of volunteers around him, because nature does not know office hours, like an organization such as DLVV. This group of volunteers used the name Widecast Aruba and today there are still a few of them active. They first started protecting the Leatherback Sea Turtle nests on Palm Beach and Eagle Beach. This group also investigated which other species of sea turtles use Aruba as their nesting habitat and which beaches are used by them. For a period of 25 years a study has been conducted

in which every early morning the beach was being monitored in which now there is a good overview of sea turtle nesting activities.

There are 4 different sea turtle species that visit Aruba to lay their eggs, each with their own specific season:

- Leatherback Sea Turtle - Lederschildpad - Driekiel (March – September)
- Loggerhead Sea Turtle - Dikkopschildpad - Cawama (May – September)
- Hawksbill Sea Turtle - Karetsschildpad - Caret (June – December)
- Green Turtle - Soepschildpad - Turtuga Blanco (July-November)

There also came a better understanding and overview of the biggest threats to the sea turtles existence in Aruba and how these problems should be tackled. Despite hard work, all those years, most problems have not really gone away, but luckily and thanks to the enormous efforts from the volunteers, the sea turtles are still here. On Aruba the sea turtles are threatened with extinction by pollution, driving on dunes and beaches with quads and 4x4's and the loss of nesting beaches due to coastal development on behalf of tourism. Because coastal development comes with artificial light and artificial light is a major issue for sea turtles, mother turtle usually comes on shore at night looking for a dark beach to make her nest. However... a dark beach is hard to find here nowadays. Light causes stress and can result in her returning to the sea without laying her eggs. Artificial light causes disorientation for the baby sea turtles (hatchlings).

The Green Turtle, for example, keeps the sea grasses on the bottom of the sea short and therefore a healthy place for many fish to de-



posit their eggs. The Leatherback, the largest turtle of the world, eats mainly jellyfish and helps maintain the balance between jellyfish and plankton. Despite the threats that exist on Aruba, the turtles still keep coming. That's why today Turtugaruba is especially proud of the volunteers and the many people and organizations of our community that carry a warm place in their hearts for the sea turtles. All four species are active now, which means all hands on deck in the field for us, the volunteers. We strive to keep the sea turtles, our oldest 'repeat guests', always coming back to Aruba and get the chance to reproduce here.

What you can do to protect the sea turtles

- Lights out for sea turtles.
- Do not drive on beaches.
- Do not litter. Do not leave any plastic cups, straws or bags on the beach.
- Remove obstacles from the beach.
- Do not disturb a nesting sea turtle. Do not attempt to touch the turtle but stay at a respectful distance (at least 10 meters).
- Do call Turtugaruba (24 hour Turtle Hotline: (297) 5929393).

For more information visit the facebook page Turtugaruba Foundation. □



How guests can honor their budgets in peak wedding season

By AMANDA BARROSO of NerdWallet

It's a banner year for weddings, with industry experts at the Wedding Report predicting that more than 2.5 million couples will tie the knot — a 40-year high. But you might find your finances aren't quite ready to take on the costs associated with being a wedding guest.

Half (50%) of Americans say they plan to attend a wedding in 2022 — but less than a third (31%) have built attendance into their budgets, according to a new survey.

"I think guests are going to start looking at all the things that they never really looked at before and determining, 'Is it really worth me attending this event?'" says Sheavonne Harris, a wedding planner based in New York City. In some cases, they may just decide to send a nice gift in their absence, she says.

Before you RSVP, weigh important factors — from airfare costs to your relationship with the couple — and consider these ideas for fitting attendance into your budget.

THINK ABOUT SAVING ON TRAVEL COSTS

Among the top factors Americans consider before attending a wedding are how far it is from home (47%) and the cost of travel and lodging (43%), according to a NerdWallet survey of more than 2,000 people conducted online by The Harris Poll.



In this Tuesday, May 23, 2017 file photo, a bride and groom pose for wedding pictures at the Bethesda Terrace in New York's Central Park.

Associated Press

Airfare or driving costs plus lodging can add up. Using miles or points you've earned can help reduce travel expenses. Getting around town once you arrive is another cost. "Each wedding is a few hundred dollars to rent a car when you're there for a weekend," says Elliott Appel, a certified financial planner in Madison, Wisconsin. Consider sharing rental-car or ride-share costs with other guests to save some cash. Most couples are still providing hotel room blocks at a discounted rate for their guests, Harris says. Make sure you don't miss the deadline to catch that deal. You might also consider sharing a room or split-

ting a vacation rental with other guests.

Appel also suggests making the trip do double duty if you have nearby family or friends who you were planning to visit this year.

SET REASONABLE SPENDING LIMITS FOR GIFTS AND OUTFITS

Getting to the wedding is only part of the cost. You also want to bring a gift and look presentable. After more than two years of pandemic living, formal clothes hanging in your closet might not fit the way they used to.

"If you can duplicate outfits as opposed to doing multiple different outfits for every wedding, I always recommend that," Appel says.

Clothing rental services like Rent the Runway or Nuuly help you cut costs and still feel special.

And don't let expectations to spend outrageously on gifts hold you back.

"Just because we know the person well doesn't necessarily mean that you need to spend a significant amount of money on a gift," Appel says. He suggests a gift with personal meaning behind it, something "that maybe reflects back on an experience or a shared memory." A group gift is another way to give a higher-priced item without busting your budget.

STRETCH THE BUDGET STRATEGICALLY

You're likely to do every-

thing you can to share a close friend's or family member's special day — even if it stretches your budget.

Appel doesn't advocate going into debt for a wedding. But, he says, "I also don't want people to miss out on those memorable experiences." He suggests trying to reduce spending or temporarily increase income to cover extra costs. If those strategies aren't enough, you might consider putting your wedding guest expenses on a credit card. However, make sure you have a plan to pay off that debt — the debt avalanche or snowball methods are popular. And use credit cards strategically. Moving charges to a card with a low or 0% APR for balance transfers gives extra time to pay without running up a lot of interest.

IF YOU HAVE TIME, SAVE BEFORE GOING

If you know there are weddings in your future, start planning now.

Build guest expenses into your budget with a sinking fund — a savings account dedicated to a planned expense. Consistently saving smaller chunks over time is more manageable. Also, cutting costs across your budget not only helps you afford wedding attendance but also respond to rising inflation in general. Think about buying store brands, renegotiating bills, canceling subscriptions and trimming discretionary spending. □

U.S. fishing haul fell 10% during first pandemic year

By PATRICK WHITTLE

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP)

— America's commercial fishing industry fell 10% in catch volume and 15% in value during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, federal regulators said Thursday.

The 2020 haul of fish was 8.4 billion pounds, while the value of that catch was \$4.8 billion, officials with the National Oceanic and At-

mospheric Administration said. The early months of the pandemic posed numerous challenges for the U.S. fishing industry, which has remained economically viable despite the difficult year, NOAA officials said.

"It was fishery closures, boats not going out due to COVID, border closings due to COVID, lots of disruption in the flow of goods and services," said Michael

Liddel, NOAA's commercial fishery statistics branch chief.

NOAA made the announcement as it unveiled its "Status of the Stocks" report, which provides details about the health of the nation's commercial fishing industry.

The report said there were 51 fish stocks on the federal government's "overfished list" in 2021. That list includes stocks that have been de-



A scallop fisherman heads out at dawn Saturday, Dec. 17, 2011, on opening day off Harpswell, Maine.

Associated Press

pleted by excessive fishing and the number was an in-

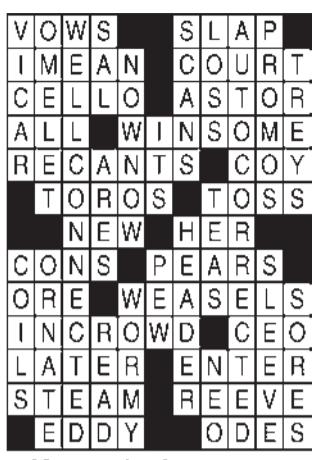
crease of two from the previous year. □

CROSSWORD

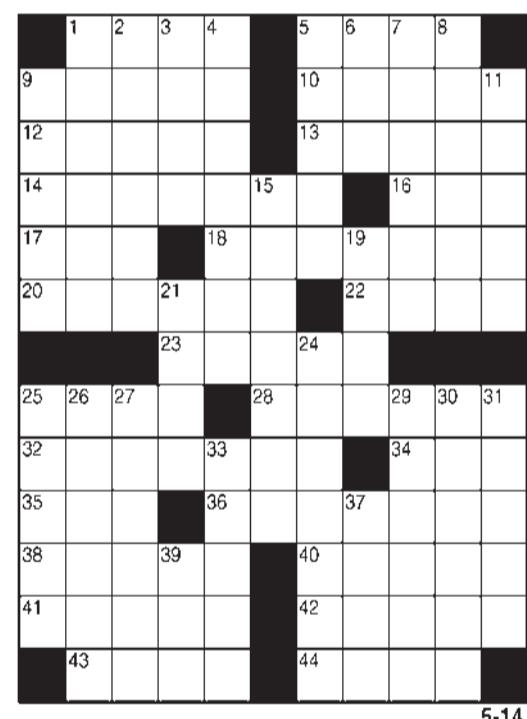
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Stir up 43 Collars
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- 38 Milking seat
- 40 Cheering wildly
- 41 Baseball's Joe
- 42 Carter and Gwyn



Yesterday's answer



5-14

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-14

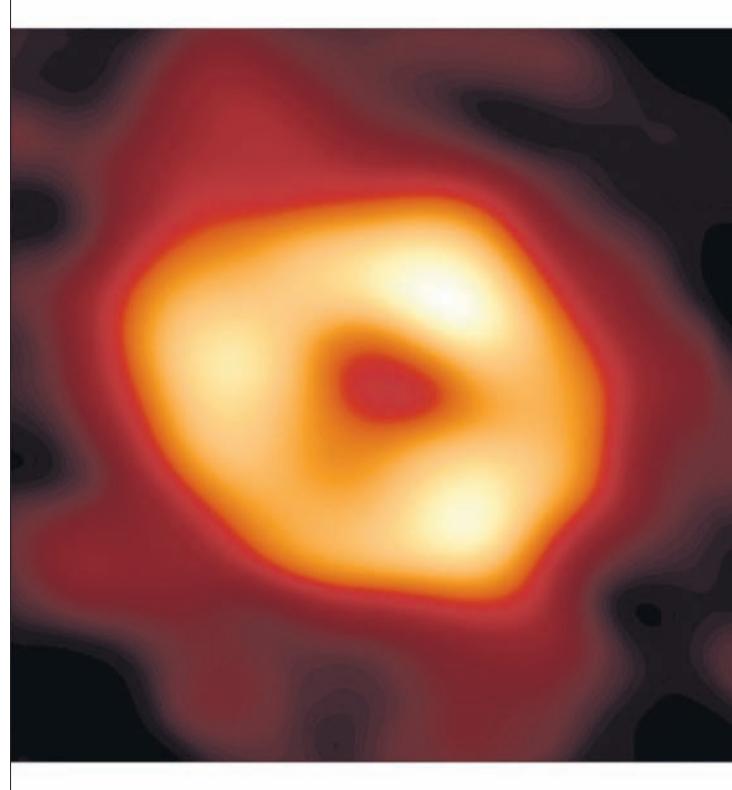
CRYPTOQUOTE

E X B I W S Z J A Y J A P W B R M J W B G
E K M W I P B W I S Z B W S Z I A
J A S B X X J P B A E B . — S Z K N I G

G U I G U

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I LIKE TO THINK OF THOUGHTS AS LIVING BLOSSOMS BORNE BY THE HUMAN TREE. — JAMES DOUGLAS

Astronomers capture 1st image of Milky Way's huge black hole



This image released by the Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration, Thursday, May 12, 2022, shows a black hole at the center of our Milky Way galaxy.

Associated Press

By SETH BORENSTEIN

WASHINGTON (AP) — The world's first image of the chaotic supermassive black hole at the center of our Milky Way galaxy doesn't portray a voracious cosmic destroyer but what astronomers Thursday called a "gentle giant" on a near-starvation diet.

Astronomers believe nearly all galaxies, including our own, have these giant black holes at their bustling and crowded center, where light and matter cannot escape, making it extremely hard to get images of them. Light gets bent and twisted around by gravity as it gets sucked into the abyss along with superheated gas and dust. The colorized image unveiled Thursday is from an international consortium behind the Event Horizon Telescope, a collection of eight synchronized radio telescopes around the world. Getting a good image was a challenge; previous efforts found the black hole too jumpy.

"It burbled and gurgled as we looked at it," the University of Arizona's Feryal Ozel said. She described it as a "gentle giant" while announcing

the breakthrough along with other astronomers involved in the project. The picture also confirms Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity: The black hole is precisely the size that Einstein's equations dictate. It is about the size of the orbit of Mercury around our sun.

Black holes gobble up galactic material but Ozel said this one is "eating very little." It's the equivalent to a person eating a single grain of rice over millions of years, another astronomer said.

"Pictures of black holes are the hardest thing to think about," said astronomer Andrea Ghez of the University of California, Los Angeles. She wasn't part of the telescope team but earned a Nobel Prize for the discovery of the Milky Way's black hole in the 1990s.

She said the image of "my baby" is exactly how it should be — an eerie-looking orange-red ring with utter blackness in the middle. Scientists had expected the Milky Way's black hole to be more violent, especially since the only other image from another galaxy shows a far bigger and more active black hole.

"It is the cowardly lion of black holes," said project scientist Geoffrey C. Bower of Taiwan's Academia Sinica Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics.

Because the black hole "is on a starvation diet" so little material is falling into the center, and that allows astronomers to gaze deeper, Bower said.

The Milky Way black hole is called Sagittarius A (with an asterisk denoting star). It's near the border of Sagittarius and Scorpius constellations and is 4 million times more massive than our sun. Bower said it is probably more typical of what's at the center of most galaxies, "just sitting there doing very little."

It is incredibly hot, trillions of degrees, Ozel said.

The same telescope group released the first black hole image in 2019. The picture

was from a galaxy 53 million light-years away that is 1,500 times bigger than the one in our galaxy. The Milky Way black hole is much closer, about 27,000 light-years away. A light year is 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion kilometers).

To get the picture, the eight telescopes had to coordinate so closely "in a process similar to everyone shaking hands with everyone else in the room," said astronomer Vincent Fish of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Astronomers worked with data collected in 2017 to get the new images. The next step is a movie of one of those two black holes, maybe both, Fish said.

The project cost nearly \$60 million with \$28 million coming from the U.S. National Science Foundation.

Even though it is quieter than expected, the center of the Milky Way is an important place to study, Ghez said.

It's "like an urban downtown, everything is more extreme. It's crowded. Things move fast," Ghez said in an interview. "We live out in the suburbs (in a spiral arm of the galaxy). Things are calm out here." □

Film Review: 'Firestarter' remake fails to ignite

By LINDSEY BAHR

For a movie about a girl with pyrokinetic powers, "Firestarter" is lacking a certain spark.

This new adaptation of Stephen King's 1980 novel is not scary or thrilling, nor is it emotionally resonant or particularly moving. No, this outing is a dull slog, even with its cool, synth John Carpenter score and the should've-been-inspired decision to cast Zac Efron as the father of the flame-throwing preteen.

But "Firestarter" might not have had much to live up to in the first place. The 1984 film, which starred Drew Barrymore and David Keith as the daughter-father pair, was not exactly well-received. Roger Ebert wrote that its "crucial flaw is the lack of a strong point to the story. A little girl has her dangerous power, some government agents want to examine her, others want to destroy her, and things catch on fire. That's about it." The original source material isn't one of King's most beloved either.

Why anyone would want to resurrect this particular property is a bit of a mystery, beyond the fact that some might have a misplaced fondness for it because they saw it at an impressionable age. One of the best things that can be said about this iteration, written by Scott Teems and directed by Keith Thomas, is that it neither adds nor subtracts anything from "Firestarter's" lackluster history (though it does jettison the pedophile undertones of a crucial character). But on the whole, it just once again takes something that should be creepy and thrilling and makes it dreary.

Ryan Kiera Armstrong takes on the role of Charlie, who is a bit of an introvert and a social outcast in her school. She's not allowed to have a phone or the Internet, and she's been told by her father to simply repress her scary fire-starting powers. But questions are rising (hormones too) and there's jerks and bullies around too and the fire comes out at inopportune times. The



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Zac Efron, left, and Ryan Kiera Armstrong in a scene from "Firestarter."

mom, Vicky, played by Sydney Lemmon (who is Jack Lemmon's granddaughter), thinks it'd be better to teach the kid how to use the powers instead of abstaining completely, but she's overruled and pretty soon, it's just Andy (Efron) and Charlie on the run. Andy and Vicky aren't just befuddled parents of a fire-starting 11-year-old, either: They have personal experience too. A grainy reel at the start informs us that they were subjected to some secret government testing while in college and came out with powers of their own. And it's these officials, led by Captain Hollister (played by Gloria Reu-

ben, who is given the worst lines in the script), who are interested in acquiring Charlie. So Hollister calls a former test subject, Rainbird (Michael Greyeyes), to go find her. Armstrong has a great scream and a nice presence, but she isn't given much of a character to latch on to. Based on how pristine her inexplicably barrel-curled hair looks for most of the film, though, it seems that those in charge might have been more concerned with the aesthetics than the performance.

The same could be said for the rest of the movie, which feels like mummified homage. There is nothing

to latch on to that might make us care even the tiniest bit about the plight of this family, the poor souls caught in the crossfire, or even the bureaucrats who fancy themselves the good guys. □

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Detention of WNBA's Griner in Moscow extended by 1 month

MOSCOW (AP) — WNBA star Brittney Griner had her pre-trial detention in Russia extended by one month Friday, her lawyer said.

Alexander Boykov told The Associated Press he thinks the relatively short extension indicated that Griner's case would go to trial soon. The 31-year-old American basketball player has been in custody for nearly three months.

Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist who plays for the Phoenix Mercury, was detained at a Moscow airport in February after vape cartridges containing oil derived from cannabis were allegedly found in her luggage. She faces drug smuggling charges that carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

Griner appeared for the brief hearing at a court outside Moscow handcuffed, wearing an orange hoodie and holding her face down. She did not express "any complaints about the detention conditions," Boykov said.

The Biden administration says Griner is being wrongfully detained. The WNBA and U.S. officials have worked toward her release, without visible progress.

"Today's news on Brittney Griner was not unexpect-



WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner leaves a courtroom after a hearing, in Khimki just outside Moscow, Russia, Friday, May 13, 2022.

Associated Press

ed, and the WNBA continues to work with the U.S. government to get BG home safely and as soon as possible," the basketball league said in a statement. State Dept spokesman Ned Price said diplomats from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow spoke with Griner on Friday and reported she "is doing as well as can be expected in these circumstances." Russian officials have described Griner's case as a criminal offense without making any political associations. But Moscow's

war in Ukraine has brought U.S.-Russia relations to the lowest level since the Cold War.

Despite the strain, Russia and the United States carried out an unexpected prisoner exchange last month — trading former Marine Trevor Reed for Konstantin Yaroshenko, a Russian pilot serving a 20-year federal prison sentence for conspiring to smuggle cocaine into the United States.

While the U.S. does not typically embrace such ex-

changes, it made the deal in part because Yaroshenko had already served a long portion of his sentence.

The Russians may consider Griner someone who could figure into another such exchange.

The State Department last week said it now regards Griner as wrongfully detained, a change in classification that suggests the U.S. government will be more active in trying to secure her release even while the legal case plays out.

The status change places her case under the purview of the department's Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, which is responsible for negotiating for the release of hostages and Americans considered wrongfully detained.

Also working on the case now is a center led by Bill Richardson, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations who helped secure the release of multiple hostages and detainees, including Reed.

It's not entirely clear why the U.S. government, which for weeks had been more circumspect in its approach, reclassified Griner as a wrongfully detained. But under federal law, there are a number of factors

that go into such a characterization, including if the detention is based on being an American or if the detainee has been denied due process. Besides Griner, another American regarded as unjustly detained in Russia is Paul Whelan, a corporate security executive from Michigan. Whelan was arrested in December 2018 while visiting for a friend's wedding and was later sentenced to 16 years in prison on espionage-related charges his family has said are bogus. □

Bouwman gets 1st grand tour stage win, López keeps Giro lead



Koen Bouwman, of the Netherlands, celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win during the seventh stage of the Giro D'Italia cycling race from Diamante to Potenza, Italy, Friday, May 13, 2022.

Associated Press

POTENZA, Italy (AP) — Dutch cyclist Koen Bouwman claimed a first grand tour stage victory after winning a tough seventh stage

of the Giro d'Italia on Friday and Juan Pedro López kept hold of the pink jersey. Bouwman was given a great leadout by Team

Jumbo-Visma teammate — and 2017 Giro winner — Tom Dumoulin and sprinted to the line to edge out Bauke Mollema and Davide Formolo by two seconds as the Giro tackled its first mountain range, the Apennines.

It was only a second ever victory for Bouwman, who won a stage in the Critérium du Dauphiné in 2017. "Unbelievable, like my first victory in the Dauphiné, I can't believe it," he said. "It was such a hard day actually, and in the final we were four guys with two of us, and Tom did a superb job in the last 2k."

Bouwman had time to look behind and raise his arms over his head as he crossed the finish line of the 196-kilo-

meter (122-mile) route from Diamante to Potenza that included four categorized climbs and almost zero flat sections.

All four had been part of a seven-man breakaway that managed to get away on the second categorised climb, the top classified ascent up Monte Sirino.

"I was feeling quite good the whole day," Bouwman said. "One time on the climb I had a bit of trouble. It was steeper than I thought but when I started my sprint I felt so much power left. I knew I was getting close to the victory and at 150 meters I looked behind and I had a big gap so, yeah, perfect."

Most of the overall contenders crossed the line

together, nearly three minutes behind Bouwman. López maintained his 38-second advantage over Lennard Kämna after moving into the overall lead on Tuesday. Rein Taaramäe was third, 58 seconds behind López.

Saturday's eighth stage sees the Giro return to Naples for the first time since 2013 when the city hosted the start of the Italian grand tour.

The undulating 153-kilometer (95-mile) stage starts and finishes in Naples, but it leaves the seaside city to take in four laps of a 19-kilometer (12-mile) circuit in the volcanic surrounding area.

The Giro finishes on May 29 in Verona. □

Analysis: Amazon Prime Video gets solid 1st slate from NFL

By JOE REEDY

AP Sports Writer

A defensive coordinator trying to put together a game plan to stop Justin Herbert or Patrick Mahomes has an easier task than the NFL trying to put together the schedule for Thursday night football.

There's trying to put together intriguing matchups, only four teams can play multiple Thursday games, and there are the considerations of who and where teams are playing the week before because of the short turnaround.

Add into it a new television partner paying \$1.2 billion a season to carry those games for 11 years, and the pressure is ratcheted up even more.

Yet, despite all the hurdles, Amazon Prime Video is pleased about its slate of games for its first season as the exclusive carrier of "Thursday Night Football."

The Los Angeles Chargers-Kansas City Chiefs matchup on Sept. 15 was announced two weeks ago, while the remaining 14 games were unveiled on Thursday as part of the full rollout of the NFL regular-season schedule.

"We're very excited. We think we have some can't-miss games. A lot of these are all about the matchup," said Marie Donoghue, Amazon's vice president of Global Sports Video.

Donoghue said Amazon made its first formal pitch to the league's broadcasting department the week before the Super Bowl to let the NFL know about its focus and priorities. As with all of the networks, discussions continued up until the final schedule was set.

Even though Amazon is the league's first new broadcast partner since Fox in 1994, Donoghue is familiar with the process as an executive VP at ESPN for 19 years. Jeffrey Kaiser, Amazon's head of US sports programming, was with NFL Network for five years.

Hans Schroeder, the executive vice president of NFL Media, also noted there was a little bit of a familiarity process with Amazon



Kansas City Chiefs cornerback Trent McDufie runs the ball during rookie mini camp NFL football practice Monday, May 9, 2022, in Kansas City, Mo.

Associated Press

because it had partnered with CBS, Fox and NFL Network on a tri-cast model for Thursday night games for five seasons.

Still, there was a little bit of a "getting to know you" period for both sides.

"There's a lot that everyone was going through for the first time, but there was great collaboration and cooperation between the teams," he said. "I think we've put ourselves in a really good position for a strong launch of TNF."

The package gets off to a strong start. After Chargers-Chiefs, Pittsburgh goes to Cleveland on Sept. 22 which could be a matchup between Steelers' first-round pick Kenny Pickett and the Browns' Deshaun Watson, who was acquired in a mega-trade with Houston.

On Sept. 29, it's a matchup of 2020 first-round quarterback draft selections when Miami and Tua Tagovailoa head to Cincinnati to face the defending AFC champion Bengals and Joe Burrow. The following week has two signal callers in new places with Indianapolis' Matt Ryan visiting Denver and Russell Wilson.

"You've really got a long and strong runway of great games, hopefully, that help build that behavior and customer awareness that Thursdays are now on Amazon," Schroeder said.

The headline game on the schedule is Oct. 27, the second matchup between Baltimore's Lamar Jackson and Tampa Bay's Tom Brady. Other games of note are Tennessee at Green Bay (Nov. 17), Buffalo at New England (Dec. 1), Las Vegas at the Los Angeles Rams (Dec. 8) and Dallas at Tennessee (Dec. 29).

"I was really pleasantly surprised. I think there's some real major attractions on this schedule," executive producer Fred Gaudelli said. "The quarterback matchup is so critical because good quarterback play usually means good competitive football. I did Brady against Jackson

when Brady was with New England a few years back (on 'Sunday Night Football'). That's a great quarterback matchup just because of the contrasting styles."

Every team will play on Thursday, but the New York Giants, Minnesota and Detroit will not appear on the Amazon package. All three are playing on Thanksgiving. Buffalo and New England are also playing on Thanksgiving before meeting each other the next week.

As with every league partner, Amazon also will have a preseason game when San Francisco faces Houston on Aug. 25.

NFL Broadcasting vice president Mike North said during a conference call on Friday that even though this is Amazon's first year, this slate of games is similar to what CBS and Fox would

have received in past years when they had the Thursday night package. "Do you want the big brands against each other and create a couple of A vs. A games, knowing that might bring with it a couple of B vs. B games, or do you want a steady diet of A-minus and B-plus games?"

I think we tried to kind of find that balance this year, not dissimilar from how we would have done it in the past, North said. "Putting the good games up early in the season like that, hopefully, it's going to help change fan behavior and find their way to Amazon Prime."

Donoghue and Schroeder said there will be plenty of opportunities to notify people where and how to tune into the games. They will also be available on stations in the participating teams' markets, which is the same practice when the contests are on ESPN and NFL Network.

While Al Michaels and Kirk Herbstreit have been announced as the broadcasting team, along with Tony Gonzalez as an analyst on pregame, halftime and postgame shows, the process of putting together the rest of the team is proceeding, including the sideline reporter.

Gaudelli spent a couple days earlier this month meeting with Amazon executives in Los Angeles, and said getting everything together continues to progress, even though the first game is three months away.

"I can tell you, people are going to have options and enhancements that they haven't had with NFL games," he said. "And, for someone like me that's been at this for a while, it's just been a great jolt of energy." □

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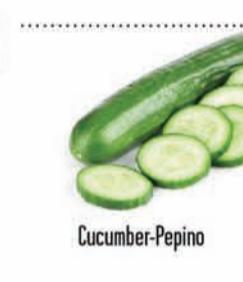


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\$ 2.85

Per KG



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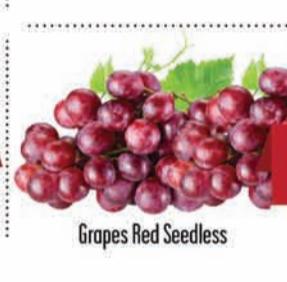
Per KG
\$ 2.62

SAVE
\$ 0.23

SAVE
\$ 0.23

\$ 2.62

Per KG



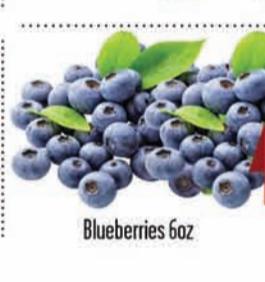
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